IAS officer gets NY posting for cancer drug trial

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NEW DELHI: The government has relaxed service rules to post a 43-year-old IAS officer diagnosed with cancer in New York so he has access to clinical trials of advanced drugs. In the US, Clinical trials are a life-or-death option; often requiring long hospital stays, but many terminally ill patients give them a shot after the existing line of treatment fails.

Mansa, a shorthand clerk, officer posted in Ranchi in the communications and programmes implementation department, has been recommended for the post of education officer, a human resource development ministry position, in New York. The civil service board denied the assignment, sending the recommendation to the appointment committee of cabinet for approval. A couple of mandatory qualifications have been put aside to facilitate her relocation—a two-year deputation at the centre and blocking the position by not announcing the vacancy so the officer could apply.

The officer said she would volunteer for clinical trials of laboratory-stage medicines at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. If her new role, Mansa will have to promote closer interdepartmental collaboration between the two countries—a task that officials in the IRSB ministry say demands frequent travel between New York and Washington. "I have been suffering from the disease for the past six years and the treatment until now has not worked," she said, without specifying the nature of the cancer. Questions are being raised if she would be able to do justice to her posting because Clinical trials require long periods of hospitalisation. "Clinical trials do not make sense and requires a patient to be admitted to hospital for long periods. How can you expect her to work efficiently and discharge her duties efficiently?" an officer asked. Several IAS officers are eligible for treatment abroad at government expense. Mansa could have done that without blocking an important position, he said.